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CAUGHT OUT

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BOSTON

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Sent prepaid on receipt of price by

Walter H. Baker & Company

No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

CAUGHT OUT!

A Farce in Three Acts

By

H. MANLEY DANA

*Author of "Representing Barrett, Cox & Co.,"
"Local and Long Distance," etc.*

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1914

PS 635
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CAUGHT OUT!

CHARACTERS

BILL RANDOLPH
DICK ROGERS
JACK DAVIS
GEORGE BROWN
KENNETH MARSH
CHARLIE KING
DE WITT BOYD, *manager of the team.*
HARRY WILKES, *formerly an Amherst pitcher; now wanted to pitch on the Carlton team.*
MR. WEAVER, *afflicted with sunstroke. Has come to Carlton Springs to take the cure.*
BESS MASON
CHRISTABEL LEE } *both staying at the Carlton Springs Hotel.*
HOTEL WAITERS.
Remainder of team and substitutes.

SETTING

For all three Acts, the sitting-room of the Carlton Springs Hotel in Carlton Springs, a health resort in New York State.

TIME

ACT I. Wednesday morning, about ten o'clock.
ACT II. The same day—afternoon.
ACT III. Saturday afternoon after the game.



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Caught Out!

ACT I

SCENE.—*The sitting-room of the hotel. A large, spacious room, with the look of a "best room" in a small country hotel. Windows right and left back, large sofa against the wall between them; doors, R. and L., toward back of stage; fireplace full of asparagus, R.; piano, L., with phonograph beside it, large reading table in C. with easy chair beside it, other chairs scattered around the room where necessary; writing table in front of left window.*

(As the curtain rises the six named members of the team are lounging around the room. JACK DAVIS sitting by the fireplace playing "Drink to me only with thine eyes" on the mandolin. KENNETH MARSH and CHARLIE KING picking out "Chop-sticks" on the piano and whistling loudly. GEORGE BROWN sprawling in the Morris chair enveloped in a newspaper. BILL RANDOLPH and DICK ROGERS scuffling noisily on the sofa.)

DICK. Hey! Get up; you're killin' me!

BILL. Ah, leave me lay! I'm not seeking to hurt you. All I desire is a little kindness and a small portion of sofa. *(Pushes himself over.)* Come—roll over —

DICK *(growling).* You're on my game finger.

BILL. You certainly are proud of that finger! Why, I couldn't count the times I've put mine out of joint—all of 'em —

DICK. Yes, we all know you're a wonder! Say! You're lyin' on my fountain pen now—and that I won't stand. Ow —leave me alone, Bill! *(Turns his back on him.)*

BILL *(appropriating more room and stretching himself out in great satisfaction, one foot balanced on top of the other).* There! that's something like! Now we can lie real ca'm and peaceful and listen to the lovely music!

DICK. You can listen. I'm going to sleep. Gee, I'm sleepy.

JACK (*looking up from mandolin*). Dance too much for you last night, Rogers?

BILL (*answering for him*). Lord, no! He's a regular social butterfly, Dick is! Like all the Southerners. What is one dance to him? A mere drop in the bucket.

(*Waves left arm grandiloquently*.)

DICK. Take your elbow out of my mouth. Say, Bill! Will you keep quiet or have I got to make you?

BILL (*explanatorily to JACK*). That's just his warm Southern nature. They're all like that. And when we get Harry Wilkes —

JACK. If we get him, you mean.

BILL. Well, anyway, I expect he'll be worse yet.

DICK. Why, how d'you make him Southern? Thought he came from Amherst?

BILL. He did, you donkey, but he's a Virginian born! And spoiled, probably. Pitchers always are.

JACK. Well, if we only get him, after having had to practice to Dick's pitching, I don't care if he's a regular man-eater!

BILL. No, believe me! We can endure a few fits of passion, provided he gets my signals right. Say, Dick! You're the most independent little pitcher I ever saw! Never pay any more attention to the catcher than —

DICK. Well, I'd like to see you do any better! I told you I never did pitch before and —

JACK. Well, we can get along with your pitching all right enough, but we sure do need a batter! There's not a decent one among us. King's not so worse. But with one good batter, we could walk through Lewistown's measly fielders —

DICK. How d'you know they're measly? We haven't played 'em yet.

BILL. Oh, Pete Boyd knows all the dope; where were you yesterday when he was telling us? Lewistown's got rotten fielders. Not to be compared to ours, Boyd says. And they need a pitcher the worst way. But they can bat—and we'll have the extreme pleasure of holdin' 'em down; and no batter to help us score.

JACK. Unless Harry Wilkes can bat. Lord, if he can't! We really need a batter worse than a pitcher, because Dick can

pitch, when sufficiently enraged—but at bat ! Well, we should worry !

(*Puts his feet up on the andirons and returns to his mandolin. The boys at the piano have continued to play it by fits and starts, varying "Chop-sticks" with hymns and duets and frequently stopping to laugh or argue. Their noise has made a sort of accompaniment to the conversation—sometimes dying out altogether. GEO. is still absorbed in his pipe.*)

BILL. Well, here's hopin' we get him !

(*Heaves a huge sigh and prepares to go to sleep.*)

DICK. Oh, quit talkin' shop ! We'll get him, or we won't get him.

BILL (*sleepily*). That's a nasty, lazy spirit. You should have more energy. (*DICK pushes him on to the floor and he sits there in dazed surprise.*) More—more energy, did I say ? Well, I guess I was wrong. (*The boys at the piano break out into "Moonlight Bay," KEN. singing a very flat tenor. No one pays any attention to them. BILL rises slowly, walks around and sits down on the table in the front.*) I'd be cross with him but then he's in love, so we must be lenient with him. Bess Mason turned him down again last night.

DICK (*sitting up in indignation*). How do you know, you chump ?

BILL. 'Cause she did the same thing to me shortly after. Third time too, and when I asked her if there was any one else she cared for, she said no.

JACK (*devoutly*). Thank the Lord for that !

BILL. Well, nothing for you to get encouraged about. She also said that one thing was certain ; she never would marry a baseball player ! I'm going into the Navy, soon as the season's over.

GEO. (*emerging suddenly from behind his paper*). Why wouldn't she ever marry a baseball player ?

BILL. Well, she said they were "too easy." I wonder now just what she meant ?

JACK (*in great indignation*). Easy ! I like the nerve ! Why, I'd known her a whole week before I ever —

BILL. There ! There ! Spare us the details ! And don't talk about a lady's nerve ! It's so vulgar.

GEO. I can't see why she thinks us easy.

(Wraps himself up in his paper again. An especially loud roar comes from the piano.)

JACK. Hang it, I wish they'd shut up ! I say, will you fellows kindly get on the same key ? No ! No ! Look here.

(Gets up and goes over to them, and they talk aside.)

BILL. Now he's mad. Now if I can rouse Georgy, I'll feel that I've accomplished a fair morning's work !

(Approaches GEORGE who rises suddenly and confronts him, holding out the paper.)

GEO. Here is the paper, and here is my chair. Please make yourself comfortable. And see if you can keep quiet for ten minutes, will you ? *(Saunters over to window and looks out. The group at the window are singing "Sweet Adeline," with spirit. BILL sits down in a rather dazed way, fingering the paper and murmuring "Thank you, you are too kind.")* I say, fellows, here comes Boyd ! He's got a letter. *(All spring to their feet, shouting confusedly and fervently—"Wilkes!" "D'you suppose it is?" "Gosh if we get him!" "If he only will!" etc. While they are all gesticulating and shouting GEO. leans out of the window and calls—"Is he coming?" There is a faint answer outside. Then GEO. turns joyfully to the room.)* Fellows, he's ours !

(Pandemonium breaks loose. The boys shake each other by the hand, slap each other on the back, roll DICK off the sofa, and make a break for the door. It opens suddenly and they nearly fall over MR. WEAVER, a little dried up, limping man in a smoking jacket, slippers and skull cap, who comes grumbling in. He is bewildered by the noise. Looks round in a dazed way for a minute, then says testily in a cracked voice.)

MR. W. Young men ! I must ask for a little more quiet ! As I have told you many times before, I am suffering from the effects of sunstroke, and am too weak for such a racket. It quite makes me tremble !

(He seats himself in the Morris chair, mumbling and complaining. The boys stand meekly hushed, looking at him and each other. BILL murmurs, "Yes, sir." Those to whom MR. W.'s back is turned make faces. Suddenly

BOYD enters triumphantly, his dog at his heels. He waves a letter at them and calls, "Well, fellows, heard the news?" They fall upon him, forgetting MR. W. Loud cheers and exclamations. "Good old Pete!" "Carlton forever!" "Oh, you Lewistown!" etc.)

GEO. Congratulations, Pete! You're some manager!

(Shakes his hand.)

BILL (ecstatically). You bet he is! Best little manager in the world! All together now. Hip, hip —

(They cheer loudly.)

MR. W. Young men! Really, I must insist on a little less noise! My sunstroke has left me —

BOYD. You must excuse us, Mr. Weaver. We're a little upset! We've just got a pitcher for the team. And now we're practically sure of licking Lewistown.

KEN. (ecstatically). And I could bet anything Lewistown made a try for him! (Uproarious laughter and cries of "Poor old Lewistown." "Haven't got the manager we have," etc.) When's he coming, Pete?

BOYD. He's due here to-night, I think.

MR. W. (testily). Well, I'm very glad you've got a pitcher and I hope you'll beat Lewistown ("Yea" from the boys), but you must learn to be more considerate of your elders! Now, if I didn't have a sunstroke —

BOYD (to his dog who is sitting on the floor at his feet. BOYD is on the sofa, the six boys lounging around the room. BOYD has picked up the mandolin from the table and is picking at it, with indifferent success). Turkey, never have a sunstroke. You'll find it a bore.

BILL. Come here, mut! What d'you call him, Boyd?

BOYD. Turkey. (Goes on picking.)

MR. W. (looking up from the paper he has been trying to read). Why "Turkey," may I ask?

BOYD. Because he's not allowed in this hotel.

(BILL laughs.)

KING. But he manages to get in every now and then, all samee, don't you, old boy?

(They talk to the dog. MR. W. is quite bewildered.)

MR. W. What nonsense is this? Turkeys not allowed in this hotel?

BILL. Mercy, no! All the invalids would die of the shock. 'Twould lower the moral tone of the health resort—and corrupt the natives.

(MR. W. *still more bewildered.*)

DICK. He means this sort of a Turkey, Mr. Weaver!

(*Grabs KEN., and they do an extreme version of the Turkey trot, whistling loudly.*)

BOYD. Strictly prohibited, you know, Mr. Weaver! So are dogs.

(MR. W. *indignantly retires to his paper.*)

BILL (*who has been looking out of the window*). Oh, gee! There's Bess Mason out on the court playing with the Lewis-town boob! By George! I think she's beating him!

(*All the boys but BOYD and KING run to the window and lean out, cheering and shouting occasionally. KING has seated himself at the desk and is busily writing. BOYD is still absorbed in the mandolin. The boys grow uproarious.*)

MR. W. (*throwing down his paper*). I wish those young men would leave the sitting-room if they find it necessary to make so much noise! If any of them should ever have a sun-stroke they would realize —

(*Looks round at BOYD, who is intent on the mandolin, and has not heard him. A loud roar and a catcall comes from the window. MR. W. glares angrily at them, gets up and limps muttering out of the room.*)

BOYD (*eyeing the pick in disgust*). I never can see how you wiggle the blooming thing! Say, Jack — (*Looks up and sees them all at window except KING.*) What's the matter with 'em, King?

KING (*glancing up in a preoccupied way*). Just a little cheering section for Bess Mason, I guess. Why don't you join 'em?

BOYD. I always get 'em mixed. Which is Bess? The little giggly one?

KING. They're both that.

BOYD. Well, the light-haired one, then?

KING. Nope, dark. Leave me alone, Boyd; I'm writing a letter.

(*The group at the window break up into roaring couples that slap each other on the back and laugh.*)

KEN. (*joyfully*). She's lickin' the tar out of him! Gee! I'd most as soon beat Lewistown myself!

(*They go back to the window.*)

BOYD. Where's the rest of the team, King, if I might make so bold?

KING. Oh, out fishin', I think. Don't just remember.

BOYD (*raising his voice*). By the way, fellows! I've just heard something about the Lewistown team. (*They don't hear him.*) Hey, listen! It's important! Their best batter's sprained his shoulder and won't be able to play Saturday. Say, Bill!

BILL (*in huge delight*). She's got him forty-fif!

BOYD (*impatiently*). I wish you'd choke! Here I'm trying to talk business to you —

BILL. And you won't let us watch Bess play while you do it. Very selfish of you, I call it.

JACK (*turning in astonishment*). What have you got against Miss Mason?

BOYD. Good Lord, I haven't *anything* against her; I only want to tell you —

DICK. Don't you like her?

BOYD (*patiently*). I don't know her, my dear boy. Now, do listen a minute! This is important dope. Williams, their best batter, sprained his shoulder —

KEN. } GEO. } She's got the first set!

(*The other three immediately turn to the window again.*

BOYD leans back in quiet despair.)

JACK. You mustn't mind us, Pete. It's just a case of delayed spring fever. We're all—that is, Bill is —

DICK. And you —

JACK. And you —

BOYD (*in quiet scorn*). Gone nutty over her, apparently.

BILL. Something like that! What're you going to do about it? Put us off the team, or stop our pay?

BOYD. Do? I think you're a set of hopeless idiots! Fall-ing for a girl like that.

DICK.

BILL. } Like what?

JACK. }

BOYD. Why, like that! Pretty enough, but nothing to her.

BILL. Oh, you! What'll you bet you fall for her yourself?

BOYD (*amused*). Me? I'm no fusser!

BILL. That doesn't matter. You'll fall, all right! She said all baseball players were easy. Even a manager.

Enter CHRISTABEL LEE, L. She stops unnoticed, and listens intently.

BOYD (*growing irritated*). And that's what you all are,—easy! All she has to do is whistle, and down you flop and propose!

BILL. H'm. Well, it's quite a privilege to propose to Bess Mason! She wouldn't give you the chance to!

BOYD. Why, what do you mean?

BILL (*nudging JACK, who proceeds to aid and abet him*). Oh, she's particular; deucedly particular about whom she lets propose to her!

(CHRIS. *grows more and more astonished and angry.*)

BOYD. Well, she'd better be, with all you idiots around.

JACK. Yes, only Bill and Dick and I have had the pleasure. All the rest have to sit on the side lines. You wouldn't have a look-in!

BOYD (*getting excited*). Well, I'm sure I don't see how, unless I was stricken dumb, she could keep me from proposing to her—if I wanted to.

BILL. That's just it—you would be stricken dumb; can't you see him, Johnny? (*They giggle.*)

BOYD. Why, you poor boobs, I'd like to show you! I would, too, only—

JACK (*to BILL*). Only of course he's afraid she might accept him!

BILL. Ve-ry nice and considerate of him, I do think!

JACK. You're safe, Pete. She's down on all ball players.

BOYD (*really ashamed*). Oh, quit! I didn't mean that—honest I didn't. (*They pretend incredulity.*) I'd do it in a

minute, just to show you I'm in earnest, only it does seem rather—rather —

BILL. Risky !

BOYD (*turning angrily*). See here ! You say that again, and I will propose.

BILL. All right, I'll say it again. And I'd like to see you !

BOYD. Well, hang it, I will ! She'll only think I'm another idiot like the rest of you, which I'll try to bear. It can't hurt her much, or me. And as for you ;—I'll show you you can propose to a girl any time you like, if you've got pep enough !

Enter MESSENGER, R.

MES. Wanted on the telephone, Mr. Boyd.

BOYD. Come, Turkey, let's take a walk. [*Exeunt, R.*

DICK. Gee ! Isn't he easy to tease ? Who'd have thought it ?

JACK. He's all right—he's the best old boy in the world, only he will get mad. Bad habit.

KEN. (*in awe-inspired tones*). Do you think he meant it ?

JACK. Well, it's hard to tell. He only said it because he was mad, but we could hold him to it. Shall we ?

CHRIS. Yes ! (*All turn in dismay and see her.*)

BILL. Good-night, Irene ! How—how long have *you* been here ?

CHRIS. (*bursting with indignation*). I've been here long enough to hear everything that horrid man said about Bess ! So he'd just as lief propose to her as not ! Indeed ! And he thinks he's awfully clever, doesn't he ? Well, I'll show him !

JACK (*diffidently*). Well, really, Miss Lee ! I think Miss Mason is more than able to attend to him herself, don't you know !

CHRIS. Yes, of course, but she must be prepared. I'm going to warn her, so that if he does propose to her—she will be able to just —

DICK. Put the crusher on ?

CHRIS. Yes ! The minute she finishes that match, I'll —

KEN. By the way, how's the score ?

(They all turn to the window.)

GEO. Can't make it out. He got the last game. Let's go out and rattle him.

(They start out.)

BILL (to KING). Come on, scribe ! We need your voice for the cheering !

(KING gets up reluctantly, and they all go out. At the door DICK turns.)

DICK. Don't forget to put her wise, Miss Lee.

CHRIS. Indeed I won't. (They go out r. CHRIS. mutters angrily to herself.) The horrid, conceited, boasting old —

Enter HARRY WILKES, l., carrying a suit-case, and fanning himself with his hat. CHRIS. turns suddenly, and bumps squarely into him. They spring back astonished, and both try to speak at once.

BOTH. I beg your pardon ! Oh, that's all right !

(She has stepped on his foot and WILKES hops wildly on the other foot for a moment, then tries to pretend that nothing is the matter.)

CHRIS. Oh, I've hurt you ! Did I step on your toe ?

WILKES. Oh, not at all ! (He makes a wry face, however.) Please don't trouble yourself ; it's of no consequence !

CHRIS. Oh, but it is ! I know how it hurts. Why, once at Amherst somebody stepped —

WILKES. Amherst ! When were you there ?

CHRIS. Last Junior Week. Why ?

WILKES. Why, nothing, only it's funny I didn't meet you there. I was a senior at Amherst last year. Who were you with, if you don't mind —

CHRIS. Oh, not at all. George Cowes. (She sits absently on the arm of the sofa. He leans against the table.) Did you know him ?

WILKES. Yes, indeed ! Very well. He was the class below me. I say ! It's queer we didn't meet. But then, of course, I don't dance.

CHRIS. (aghast). You don't dance ? Why—what's the matter with you ?

WILKES (laughing). Why, nothing, I guess ! Only, nobody ever offered to teach me, and —

CHRIS. (still astonished). I can't think how they can have let you go so long without learning ! It ought to be part of every college's curr—curr —

WILKES. I know what you mean.

CHRIS. Well, it ought ! Don't you think so ?

WILKES (*thoughtfully*). Well, I never minded much before ; but come to think of it, it does seem as if I'd been sort of neglected ! Look here ! Couldn't you teach me some time ? Of course, we haven't been introduced, but if you'll just wait I'll call up George Cowes and get him to introduce me to you over the 'phone ! Shall I ?

CHRIS. Why ! George Cowes is in Boston. You wouldn't —

WILKES. Oh, yes I would, if you think it necessary —

CHRIS. (*reflecting*). Mother would ! But—I don't believe it's so very necessary, do you ? Because I might just as well have met you at Amherst.

WILKES. I'm awfully glad you see it that way ! My name is Wilkes.

CHRIS. And mine is Christabel Lee.

(*They shake hands.*)

WILKES (*laughing*). I'm glad to meet you, Miss Lee. Are you named for Poe's friend who lived down by the sea ?

CHRIS. No ! She was Annabelle, wasn't she ?

WILKES. Really, I can't say. Am I to have a dancing lesson soon, please ?

CHRIS. Yes. This afternoon, if you like. I shall teach you the Boston, and the one-step, but they don't allow one-stepping here. (*Loud cheering outside.*) My goodness !

WILKES. What's that ?

CHRIS. (*looking out of the window*). Oh, I guess she must have beaten the Lewistown boy ! Yes, they've stopped and are coming into the hotel. Did you ever hear such a noise ?

WILKES (*in dismay*). Lewistown boy ? Coming in here ? Then excuse me ! I—I'll have to go—if you don't mind.

(*Picks up suit-case and hat and rushes out L.*)

CHRIS. Why, what can be the matter with him ?

(*Stands looking after him in surprise.*)

Enter BESS MASON from R. She wears a tennis suit and carries a racket and balls. She calls back over her shoulder.

BESS. All right, then, to-morrow morning ! Good-bye !

(Stops short at sight of CHRIS., and goes over and peers over CHRIS.'s shoulder at WILKES'S receding back.) Very attractive from the back ! Why is he in such an awful hurry ?

CHRIS. I'm sure I don't know ! He —

BESS. Was he trying to sell you something ?

(Jumps up and sits on table, swinging her feet and bouncing a ball on the floor. CHRIS. goes back to the sofa.)

CHRIS. (indignantly). Bess Mason ! Of course not ! He's a very nice boy, even if he can't dance —

BESS. Why ! How did you find that out ?

CHRIS. What ? Oh, I don't know, it's not important. (Eager to change the subject.) Listen, Bess, I have something to tell you —

BESS. Already ? And you can't have seen him for more than ten minutes !

CHRIS. (rather confused). Oh, stop ! This is important ! It's about you and that horrid Boyd man.

BESS. Why horrid ? I think he looks quite nice. What is it ? Does he want me to play on his team ?

CHRIS. No, worse than that. (Impressively.) He's going to propose to you !

BESS (calmly). How interesting. Sounds like a fortuneteller. You will marry a tall, dark blonde—I mean —

CHRIS. Now stop bouncing that silly ball and listen to me. He is doing it for a joke !

BESS (stopping in surprise). Chris ! What are you talking about ?

CHRIS. Not exactly a joke. Don't look so mad, Bess ! He—he—all the boys were raving about you and he got mad and said they were easy marks. He said all you had to do was whistle, and they'd propose to you. So then they got mad and said you wouldn't give him even a chance to, and that made him all the madder. They teased him then, and teased him, until he finally went out perfectly furious, and declaring he would propose to you, just to show them ! Don't look so mad, Bess. He was probably only —

BESS. Why, the horrid, mean, disgusting thing ! I only hope he tries it, that's all ! He'll soon find out whether I'm easy to propose to or not, the brute ! Oh, how could he ? How could the boys be so ungentlemanly and—and horrid —

CHRIS. The boys were only taking your side, Bess ! They thought he was vile to say it.

BESS. Of course they did! I might have known they would. Nice old things. But this Boyd man. Oh, I must find some way to punish him! I'll—I'll—what shall I do? Oh, dear! What—

CHRIS. You might accept him. (*Giggles.*)

BESS (*slowly*). That's a good idea. Ye-es, I might, if I dared. I—I'll do that, Chris! It will be dreadful for me, of course, but only think how dreadful for him!

CHRIS. (*aghast*). Oh, Bess, I didn't mean—I was only fooling! You'd surely never dare? Oh, Bess, you really oughtn't!

BESS (*gazing before her determinedly*). Well, I shall do it, all the same. There's no harm in it. And before I finish with him, he'll have lost all taste for proposing indiscriminately to people for a stunt! Oh, it will be fun!—I wonder what Harry'd say?

CHRIS. Harry? Who?

BESS (*beginning to bounce her ball again*). Oh, didn't I ever tell you about Harry? He's—you see—we're—at least we really aren't, but we might have been, just as well as not. For that matter, I suppose we practically are!

CHRIS. Are what? Engaged?

BESS. Yes. We thought we'd be engaged once, last winter, and then we—we sort of thought—we'd wait a while, you know, and see if we changed our minds. I'm rather changeable, you know, and—

CHRIS. But how horrible for Harry if you should change your mind!

BESS. Oh, as for that, I don't really think Harry'd mind much. You see—he's changeable, too. And we made a rule that we shouldn't see or write to each other for two whole years, and he hasn't written once, so he can't care so very much.

CHRIS. But when you'd made the rule?

BESS. Now, Chris! Do you suppose that if he cared so very much he'd let a silly rule matter?—No. I don't think Harry'll mind much!

(*Voces outside.* CHRIS. looks off to R.)

CHRIS. Here comes Mr. Boyd, Bess!

(BESS *springs off table, and crosses over to the fireplace, sitting down in a chair at the extreme right front near the*

wall, where the fireplace hides her from BOYD as he enters R. CHRIS. hurries out to the L. BILL and JACK enter behind BOYD. They do not see BESS, who is practically hidden.)

BOYD. But hang it. I was only fooling ! I wouldn't do such a —

BILL. Not after you said you would ? Oh, fie !

BOYD. But see here, fellows ! I was only blowing then because I was mad ! Granted I was a fool. I'm not going to be a cad now by going on with it !

JACK (to BILL, in *loud aside*). He is afraid she'll accept him.

BILL (in *equally loud aside*). Sure—that's it. Funny, isn't it ? Wait till we tell the other fellows !

BOYD (in *despair*). See here ! Do you promise to quit bothering me, if I—if I do it ?

BILL. Oh, yes, sir !

JACK. Only to offer our congratulations, of course, if that's considered bothering !

BOYD. Well, I'll be ready for congratulations once I'm through with this. Come on, lead me to it !

JACK. Wonder where she is. (BESS rises from her seat and comes forward carelessly.) Gosh ! the enemy is upon him !

(They go out hastily.)

BESS. Oh—good-morning, Mr. Boyd.

BOYD (quite taken aback). Good Lord ! I mean, good-morning ! (Aside.) Hang it, what's the best way to say it ?

(Stands nervously fingering the papers on the table. BESS seats herself in the Morris chair and leans back comfortably.)

BESS. You seem agitated. Is there anything I —

BOYD. Yes. You see, I — (Walks wildly up and down. JACK's and BILL's heads appear just over the ledge of the window—they are trying vainly to hear what is being said.) You see, I—I feel that I must —

BESS. Yes ? Must what ? (Aside.) Poor old soul ! I'm almost sorry for him !

BOYD (in *desperation*). In short, confound it—I—I must ask you if you will marry me ! There ! (Aside.) Now I've only to wait till she kicks me out, and it's over !

BESS. Oh, Mr. Boyd ! This is so sudden ! Do you really mean it ?

BOYD. No, of course not ! Ah, I mean yes, of course, only —

BESS (*sweetly*). Then in that case, Mr. Boyd, I am yours.

BOYD. What ! (*Stops dead back of her chair and gazes at her in anguished astonishment. Then he turns quickly, comes around the table, and faces her.*) What did you say ?

BESS (*quite quietly and never moving from her chair*). I said, I am yours ! We are engaged ! Aren't you glad ?

BOYD. Glad ! Oh, Holy Moses ! (*Clutches the table for support.*) I say, you don't really mean it, do you ?

BESS. Mean it ? Of course I do—Pete !

BOYD (*starting away from the table*). Pete ! Oh, this is too much. I can't stand it ! I —

BESS (*extending her hand to him*). Here is my hand—to kiss, Pete ! (*There being no way out of it, BOYD approaches and takes her hand. There is a painful silence. BESS, piteously.*) Aren't you going to kiss it ?

(*He raises it fearfully to his lips. BILL, JACK and GEO. enter R.*)

GEO. (*in a hoarse whisper*). I say ! What's she doing to him ?

(*BOYD drops her hand as if stung.*)

BESS (*rising and smiling gayly at them*). Good-morning, boys. You're just in time for congratulations !

THREE BOYS. W-what has happened ?

BESS (*laughing*). Just a little surprise for you. We're engaged.

THREE BOYS. Engaged ?

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same. The chairs have all been pushed up against the wall, and the table moved close to the fireplace. The phonograph is playing the "Blue Danube," and CHRIS. and WILKES are hopping wildly about the stage, vainly endeavoring to keep in time.*

CHRIS. One, two, three. One, two, three ! You don't turn enough ! And oh, do stop and get in time with the music !

(*They stop, panting and out of breath. WILKES is completely done up and sinks upon the sofa. CHRIS. turns off the machine.*)

WILKES. Whew ! That'll do for the present, thanks. Say ! Do you mean to tell me that people enjoy dancing ?

CHRIS. Yes—*dancing* !

WILKES. Oh, I see ! Do you guess I'll ever learn ?

CHRIS. I—I hope so !

WILKES. Hm. Not very encouraging teacher, are you ? Never mind ! I caught on to the one-step something grand ! Didn't I ?

CHRIS. Yes. But they don't allow that in this hotel. Nothing but Bostons and —

WILKES. Was that thing the Boston you were just teaching me ?

CHRIS. (*eagerly*). Yes ! And it's perfectly great when it's done well !

WILKES. I see. I get your meaning. That must be why I enjoyed it so much ! But why do you suppose they named it the Boston ?

CHRIS. I don't know, I'm sure ! It's a good enough name.

WILKES (*earnestly*). But it isn't in the least like Boston ! Now, New York, or Cincinnati, or San Francisco would be lots more appropriate ! It's so—so lively !

(*Gets up and takes a few steps alone, humming the time. Trips over the rug and falls headlong on the table.*)

CHRIS. (*sitting down wearily*). Perhaps Niagara Falls; since you're fond of geography.

WILKES (*rising from the table and straightening the cloth*). Boston! Believe me, that's a funny name! (BESS enters from L. *He turns and sees her*.) Why—why —

BESS. Chris, what are you doing? Why, Harry!

(*They shake hands.*)

WILKES. Bess! I hadn't an idea you were here!

(CHRIS. *looks on in surprise, then realizes that this is the Harry BESS spoke of and starts slowly out*.)

BESS. You hadn't? Then why did you come? (*Pouts.*)

WILKES. Oh—why, you see—don't go, Miss Lee, please, we're not half—hang it, she's gone! You see, Bess, I'm engaged —

(*Continues to look after CHRIS. BESS looks at him in pained astonishment.*)

BESS. Engaged? Oh, Harry!

WILKES. Engaged to play on the Carlton team. What makes you look so funny, Bess? It certainly is a fine surprise to find you here. I hadn't the dimmest —

BESS (*eagerly*). Let's sit down on the sofa and have a talk. (*They sit down side by side.*) Mercy! What a looking room! What were you and Chris doing?

WILKES. Why, she was teaching me to dance, and —

BESS. Teaching you to dance! Oh, Harry! And you never used to let me even try!

WILKES. Well, you see, I—I didn't know you were here, Bess! (*Looks around.*) And now she's gone. By thunder, everybody's running away! First Boyd goes rushing off, before I can even get to see him, and doesn't say where he's going or when he's coming back —

BESS (*smiling grimly*). Yes, he had rather a shock, and went walking, to get over it, I guess!

WILKES. Well, I wish he'd come back. Fine kind of a manager he must be! And then Miss Lee; whatever made her go off I can't see.

BESS. Well, you're sure to see her again, you know! Now, Harry, you must be patient and listen to me! I have something very important to tell you. I—well—Harry!

What would you think of a man who made fun of a girl to a lot of boys, and boasted that he could propose to her any time he liked, and—and made fun of her, you know, and—what would you think of him ?

WILKES. The girl's brother ought to lick him, if he made fun of her.

BESS. Ah ! then you do think he should be punished ! I'm so glad !

WILKES. Sure I do ! Who is it, Bess ?

BESS. I'm coming to that, Harry. I thought he should be punished too. Nobody seemed to be going to lick him, so I—I punished him myself ! I let him propose to me, and then —

WILKES. Gave him the deuce, I suppose ? (*Tries to conceal a yawn.*) Good enough for him, too !

BESS. No, Harry, it was much, much worse than that ! I —accepted him !

WILKES (*turning and staring at her*). What ! you didn't ! Why, Bess Mason, what a mean trick !

BESS (*hastily*). Of course I really don't care anything at all about him, Harry ! Really, I don't. Do you mind very much ?

WILKES (*in surprise*). I ? Not at all ! But — (*Suddenly recalls himself.*) Ah ! that is—why, of course I mind, Bess ! Think of me. How I must feel. Haven't I been waiting for you all this time ; haven't I been working, and waiting, and hoping —

BESS. And learning to dance ?

WILKES (*stopping short*). Er, yes ! That's so !—Well, it was a mean trick, Bess, to play on the poor what's-his-name. What is his name, by the way ?

BESS (*looking off R.*). Here he comes now ! (*BOYD enters. He is striding moodily along and stops short at sight of the two, who rise from the sofa as he comes in. When he sees BESS he starts nervously and clasps and unclasps his hands behind him. BESS eyes him with delight.*) Pete, dear (*he shrinks at the name*), this is an old friend of mine whom I want you to meet. I'm sure you'll be the best of friends ! Harry, this is my fiancé, Mr.—

WILKES (*shaking BOYD's hand and playing up to BESS's hint*). I'm mighty glad to meet you and to be among the first to offer my congratulations, Mr. —

BOYD (*trying to be polite*). Oh, don't mention it—don't mention it.

(BESS considers them for a minute with her head on one side, and then slips out. They stand eyeing each other, WILKES amusedly, BOYD irritably.)

WILKES (*suddenly and with eagerness*). I say! Would you let me tell you the fix I'm in? It's the deuce of a fix, honestly, and there doesn't appear to be a soul who can help me out of it, unless possibly you could. Would you mind listening? (BOYD sits down resignedly, WILKES beside him.) Thanks, you're mighty good. You see, it's like this. I'm engaged.

BOYD (*with hearty sympathy*). Shake!

WILKES. No, you don't understand. It's not the same thing at all! I—well, I'll begin clear at the beginning, so as to make it clear. First and foremost, then, I used to pitch a little in college more or less; and so this summer I was asked to pitch on the Carlton team here; and also on the Lewistown team. Well —

BOYD (*excitedly*). What? By George! I don't believe I got your name when we were introduced, but —

WILKES (*carelessly*). My name is Wilkes. (BOYD tries to interrupt him and explain who he is, but WILKES is too preoccupied to notice, and goes quickly on.) Well—now comes the fool part of the story! (BOYD makes an impatient gesture.) Yes, I'll hurry up! You see, it was this way. I always was a silly ass more or less. Have no memory at all. It's a fact—I haven't. Now you see it didn't make the smallest diff. to me which offer I took. They were both in the same part of the country. Both offered the same, and so forth. So I finally decided by flipping a nickel. It came out Carlton, I think—I can't remember. Anyhow I wrote to one of 'em saying I'd come to them, and next day I saw the letter from the other team lying around, and remembered that I must answer that. And then—like a darn fool, I—I went and said I'd come to *them*!

BOYD (*hardly comprehending*). You—what? You didn't —

WILKES. Yes, I did! It just shows what a blooming idiot I am. I was always doing that sort of thing in college, but this is the worst yet. I honestly never did a thing like this before! It wasn't till I'd got 'em both mailed that I realized I hadn't refused either! Can you beat it?

BOYD. I certainly can't! Man alive, you don't mean —

WILKES (*calmly*). That I'm engaged as pitcher by both teams? Yes.

BOYD (*blustering*). Why, you—you —

WILKES. And I want you to help me out, if you can. Of course I don't deserve it. But really, it's too awful to contemplate! You see, one of the managers will have to let me go. That's plain. And I'd like to have 'em do it with as little bloodshed as possible. If I had a substitute to offer it might be—well—practicable! And that, you see, is how I thought you could help me, if you would! You look athletic—and I'm sure you're kind-hearted! Of course, they may not take you on, if you're out of practice. But that'll be my funeral. And I'll be eternally indebted to you if you'll only stand by me in this mess! (*Takes out handkerchief and mops his brow.*) You really can't imagine —

BOYD (*fairly shouting at him*). Do stop talking a minute, you poor fool! I can't —

WILKES. Oh, don't waste time calling me names! I know I'm a poor fool, always have been. You can't think how I despise myself, really! But honestly, my case is desperate! You're the only possible solution to the problem, and even then —

BOYD. But listen, man! You don't know —

WILKES. No, of course I don't, but I must try it out anyway! I know how you must feel about helping a boob like me, but honestly, *I'd* do it for *you*! Honest I would! And I—perhaps I can help you in another way. Don't be offended, but I know about—about your engagement.

BOYD (*stiffly*). You needn't trouble yourself about that in the least. My engagement is entirely my own affair —

WILKES. Not entirely. You see, Bess Mason is really supposed to be engaged to *me* —

BOYD. To you? Good Lord! What a mess! Great heavens! (*Gets up and walks up and down the room.*) If any one else gets engaged to anybody or anything else, I shall go mad, absolutely mad! I —

WILKES. Don't take on so, old boy! Don't you see that your troubles are really nothing at all compared to mine? Bess only accepted you to make you unhappy for a while. She'll get tired of seeing you suffer after a little; and her having been formerly engaged to me will make a good excuse for her to break it off. (*BOYD turns, hopeful in spite of himself.*) I promise to act the part of the deserted lover, and rant and rave and all that—if you'll —

BOYD. Gee, if you only would! Why, Wilkes, she's an

awful sort of a person to—to be engaged to ! She's always laughing at you ! And the fellows call me Lo now.

WILKES. Lo, the poor Indian ?

BOYD. No, short for Lothario, because I'm such a fusser. (*Grins sheepishly.*) I know I deserve it for being fresh. But I should think I'd had most enough now. By thunder, I'll never propose again.

WILKES. That's all right, old boy. All you have to do is say the word, and I'll fix you right up —

BOYD (*turning on him*). Word ! What word ?

WILKES. Why, that you'll be my substitute, you know. Is it a go ?

BOYD. Why—you boob ! Don't you really know who I am ?

WILKES. Yes—that is—Peter Somebody—I didn't —

BOYD. Peter nothing ! I'm De Witt Boyd—the manager of the Carlton team, you poor —

WILKES. But—but she *called* you Peter !

BOYD (*impatiently*). No, no. Only Pete ! There's loads of difference between 'em. Pete's a nickname. Peter's an—an insult ! (*Continues to walk up and down.*)

WILKES (*in utter astonishment*). Well, I'm blowed !

BOYD. And I won't let you go to Lewistown. (*Shouts.*) I can't let you go !

(*He is shouting. Mr. W. enters R. They don't notice him.*)

MR. W. I think I must have left my glasses in here this morning ! Why—why, what is the matter with the room ? It looks as if you had been having a prize fight ! What — (*Turns to see the two boys glaring angrily at each other. In consternation.*) They are fighting ! Dear, dear, what a place this hotel is ! I wish my sunstroke hadn't left me so nervous. (*Picks up his glasses and starts out.*) I hope they won't begin again till I get out !

(*The boys begin shouting at each other again, and Mr. W. clings to the door-knob and listens fearfully.*)

BOYD (*shouting*). We've got to have you, I tell you ! We need a pitcher badly ; and a batter still worse.

WILKES. Yes, but I don't bat a bit well.

BOYD (*somewhat dashed*). Well, you can at least try ! I'll give you some points. It's easy to bat —

WILKES. Oh, you think so, do you ? I tell you I can't bat worth a cent. Had the lowest average.

BOYD. But man alive, it's easy to bat compared to pitching ! I can bat.

WILKES (*losing his temper*). Well, doggone it, if you're so blooming good, why don't you play on your old team yourself ?

BOYD (*incensed*). Me ? I couldn't. Haven't played for years. Besides, I'm the manager. I tell you I've engaged you to play ! You got yourself in this mess—now you can get yourself out. I won't help you ! I'm sorry for you if that'll do any good, but I can't throw up my chance for the series at the beginning of the season, just to be obliging ! You'll pitch on this team, or get me a sub that's just as good as you are ! That's all the concession I'll make.

MR. W. (*timidly*). Young men, if you won't talk quite so loud, please, just listen to me a moment ! You see, I have a son —

BOYD (*trying not to be impatient*). Yes, yes, Mr. Weaver, I know you have, and I'm sorry to have disturbed you. But don't you think on the whole it would be quieter in the next room ?

(*Opens the door for him and gently but firmly helps him out.*)

MR. W. (*struggling feebly*). But you don't understand ! My son —

BOYD. I know. I am sorry. Do forgive me !

(*Pushes him out gently and shuts the door.*)

WILKES. What's his trouble ?

BOYD. Sunstroke ; and he's got it on the brain. Can't stand a bit of noise. Now, about this business. It's just as I said.

WILKES. Well, I've been thinking. Dick Potter pitches fairly well, and bats lots better than I do. He was pitcher on Varsity my Soph. year. The only hope seems to be that I might be able to find him on the 'phone. He lives in New York —

BOYD (*sceptically*). How do I know if he's really any good ?

WILKES (*looking him fiercely in the eye*). Do you think I'm lying?

BOYD (*slowly*). No, you're an awful chump. But I guess you're square, all right. Go ahead, but if you can't get him, you know, Carlton for yours!

WILKES. All right. All right. But I'll make a try at Potter first. [Exit, R.]

BOYD (*sitting down wearily*). My godmother! I'd rather handle six murderers than one fool! I — (BESS enters at L.) Oh, beg pardon. (*Rises perfunctorily*.)

BESS. You needn't beg my pardon. (*Sits on table*.) What's the matter, Pete? You look sad.

BOYD. Oh, it's nothing. You wouldn't be interested.

(*Starts for door*.)

BESS. Oh, yes, I would! Tell me, Pete. Don't you know you shouldn't have any secrets from me? (*Giggles*.)

BOYD (*turning on her wrathfully*). I say, Miss Mason, I wish you'd quit laughing. It's not a bit funny.

BESS. How can I be sure of that until you tell me what it is?

BOYD (*wearily*). Why, it's a mere matter of business.

BESS. I suppose you mean baseball. Has Harry been getting into trouble again?

BOYD (*briefly*). You guessed it.

BESS (*giggling*). He is a simp! What's he been doing now? Last time it was forgetting to take an exam and not being allowed to graduate!

BOYD. Well, he's done even better this time! He's gone and gotten himself engaged as pitcher on two teams at once!

BESS. On two teams? What two?

BOYD. Carlton and Lewistown. That's all so far.

BESS. Carlton and Lewistown! Oh, poor old Harry!

(*Laughs heartily*. BOYD *watches her ruefully*.)

BOYD. Well, you have a fine sense of humor, I must say! Oh, don't. You'll have hysterics!

BESS (*sobbing into her handkerchief*). What's he—what's he going to do about it? Oh, dear! (*Wipes her eyes*.)

BOYD. I don't know. He's trying now to get me another man; preferably one that can bat. If he can't, he stays with us, which means we'll have the whole Lewistown team over here to-morrow yelling for our blood! (*Laughs shortly*.)

Poor old Wilkes—can't help being sorry for him ! He is a chump ! He—(*laughing again*) he even suggested that *I* play on my team, so he could go to Lewistown ! Can you beat it ?

BESS. You play ? Oh, dear me ! (*Shrieks with laughter.*)

BOYD. It is funny, I must admit. (*She still laughs.*) But not as funny as all that. (*Gets angry.*) I have been known to play baseball myself once, even I !

BESS. You ? Oh, dear ! What did you play ?

BOYD (*indignantly*). I played in the field.

BESS. The field ? Oh — (*Laughs again.*)

BOYD. Well, there's nothing so disgraceful in that ! Look at Ty Cobb.

BESS. Tie Cobb ? What's that ?

BOYD. He's the greatest baseball player of the century, that's what ! And he plays field ! And bat, good-night ! he can bat !

BESS. I see ! But—but of course you couldn't bat at all, could you ?

BOYD (*warming to the argument*). Well, I had second highest average.

BESS. Really ? But you must have played on an awfully queer little team ?

BOYD. Harvard Freshmen. We beat.

BESS. Oh, Freshmen ! (*Laughs.*) And Harry thought you could play on this team ! Oh, dear ! (*Laughs.*)

BOYD. Well, and I could, if it comes to that. Dick Rogers can pitch fairly well and I could take the field. 'Twouldn't be half bad. We need somebody who can bat.

BESS. Bat ! That's not important. Harry doesn't bat worth a cent !

BOYD. But I tell you it is important. Specially on our team. We need a batter worse than a pitcher.

BESS. Any one would think you really were going to play on the team ! But of course you're only boasting !

BOYD. I'm not boasting. I'd play in a minute and let Wilkes go to Lewistown, and beat him at that, only —

BESS (*breathlessly*). Only what ?

BOYD. Well, he's just 'phoning to New York to try to get me another pitcher, and —

BESS (*scornfully*). Oh, of course ! But suppose he can't get him ? You'd surely never have spirit enough to play on your own team. To help them win ? Would you ?

(Leans toward him eagerly, her eyes shining.)

BOYD *(looking at her a minute, long and full, then speaking slowly).* You do despise me, don't you? But I would play—just to show you I have got some spirit. I will play if he can't get Potter; to show you I'm not as rotten as you think me. And I'll win, too, by all that's good if it takes —

(Turns suddenly as WILKES enters dejectedly.)

WILKES. I can't get Potter.

BESS *(turning to him triumphantly).* That's all right, Harry. We don't need Potter. And you'd better run along to Lewistown yourself as fast as you can; and remember — *(In intense excitement.)* Harry, remember this, that we're going to lick you on Saturday!

(WILKES stands astonished at the door. BOYD stands dumbly, almost equally astonished, dazed, irresolute, defiant.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same. A waiter is arranging a tea table toward the front of the stage on the right.*

Enter BESS and CHRIS., L., with hats and parasols, in great excitement. BESS is radiant, CHRIS. rather depressed. BESS throws her parasol on to the couch and seats herself at the table. CHRIS. follows more slowly.

BESS. Oh, the tea smells good ! I'm just in the mood for tea. Oh, my dear, I was never so thrilled ! Did you ever see such a game ?

CHRIS. (*in disgusted tones*). No, I never did ! He did play well though, didn't he ?

BESS. Well, I should say he did ! It was an awfully sporty thing to do ! He —

CHRIS. He was the life of the team, wasn't he ?

BESS (*beginning to pour the tea*). Indeed he was. I didn't know he had it in him ! After not having played for so long, and so little then —

CHRIS. So little ! Why, Bess Mason, he's famous for his playing.

BESS. Yes, he is now ! But he admitted to me yesterday that he hadn't played since he was a freshman in college. He hurt —

CHRIS. Well, he must have been trying to fool you then ! Why, his name's been in the paper loads of times !—Harry Wilkes —

BESS. Harry Wilkes !

CHRIS. Why, certainly ! Who did you suppose ?

BESS. Why, I wasn't talking about him at all !

CHRIS. Well, who on earth —

BESS. Why, Pete Boyd, of course !

CHRIS. Boyd ! Why, Bess Mason ! I thought you hated him !

BESS (*somewhat at a loss*). Well, I—well, I'm sure I don't see why I can't admire a man I hate for playing good baseball when —

CHRIS. But he was only a fielder, Bess ! You could hardly see him from the grand stand.

BESS. What does it matter whether we could see him or not ? He won the game, didn't he ?

CHRIS. Ye-es. I suppose you mean his batting. But batting doesn't compare with pitching, Bess ! I can bat !

BESS (*wisely*). But batting won the game, Chris ! Yes, I know it did. I heard a man say so behind me ! And he was a man who ought to know. He said he had played on a Pan-American team, or something like that.

CHRIS. (*incredulously*). Pan ? Why Pan ?

BESS. Well ! They have football gridirons, don't they ?

CHRIS. (*doubtfully*). Yes, I guess so.

BESS (*carelessly*). Well—same thing, I suppose. Any-way, he was a great judge of baseball, I'm sure ! He said Pete was a wonder the way he played and made the rest of his team play. He said his record at bat for this afternoon was one that even Ty Cobb might be proud of ! I don't suppose you know who Ty Cobb is, do you ?

CHRIS. Ty Cobb ? I thought he was a vaudeville actor.

BESS. Well, that may be another. This one that I mean is the greatest baseball player of the century ! And he plays in the field ! So there, Chris Lee !

CHRIS. Well, I'm sure, Bess, I didn't mean anything. I only said —

BESS. And did you see the way the rest of our team batted ? Why, I never was so surprised ! Who'd ever have thought that sleepy old Charlie King could run so fast ? Why, he made two runs ! I nearly fell off the stand !

CHRIS. I thought Dick Rogers did awfully well ! He almost got around three times !

BESS (*with superiority*). Yes, but that doesn't count ! He didn't help score, but George Brown did. He was great. And Bill's three-base hits. I never knew the boys could bat so well ! It was all because Pete inspired them so. Did you notice how they cheered up after his home run ? Oh, my ! I was never so thrilled ! And in the end there, when Lewistown was ahead !

CHRIS. Yes, that was lovely ! I did think that perhaps Lewistown would win then.

BESS. You sound as if you wanted Lewistown to win ! Why, Chris Mason ! You traitor !

CHRIS. (*indignantly*). I don't see why I'm a traitor, I'm

sure! Harry Wilkes is a lot nicer than these boys, and pitches beautifully. And how you can like that horrid De Witt Boyd after what he said about you —

BESS. I don't like him! That is—I—well, of course, when you're engaged to a man you have to cheer for his side, you know.

CHRIS. I don't know! I thought you were engaged to Harry Wilkes once!

BESS. Well, I'm not now, I can tell you that! I wouldn't have him for a gift! He and his dancing lessons!

Enter MR. W., and seats himself in the Morris chair.

MR. W. Young ladies, if you wouldn't talk quite so loudly! Every word you say can be heard distinctly in the next room! (*The two girls exchange glances.*) Now, if you please, I'll have a little tea. (BESS pours him a cup.) A slice of lemon, please. I find since my sunstroke that tea is very soothing to the nerves. *Before* my sunstroke I had never considered it fit for anything but females. (*The girls rise as if to go.*) Don't go, please! I shall want another cup directly. (*They sit down resignedly and absently begin eating cake.*) You have been to the game, I take it?

CHRIS. Yes, sir.—Will you have some cake?

MR. W. No, thank you. (*Sips his tea.*) Ah, and who won the game, may I ask?

BESS. Carlton, of course. Thirteen to twelve.

MR. W. Heavens! What a score! What was the matter with the pitchers?

BOTH. Nothing!

CHRIS. At least Lewistown's pitcher was fine!

BESS (*with her mouth full of cake.*) And Carlton's pitcher wasn't bad.

MR. W. I beg pardon? I fear I've become deaf since my sunstroke.

BESS. I said Carlton's pitcher wasn't bad and we had wonderful fielders.

MR. W. Well, on the whole, I am very glad that our young men won. They are rather a noisy set, but they mean well, I think. Boys will be boys. I'm rather fond, now, of that very flighty one—they call him Bill, I think?

BESS. Oh, yes, Bill Randolph! He made a three-base hit to-day.

CHRIS. On errors.

BESS. And whose errors? Humph! What was Lewistown's pitcher doing then?

CHRIS. (*earnestly*). But it wasn't his fault, really, Bess! The shortstop should have —

BESS (*wearily*). The shortstop was out where he belonged, between second and third. You can't expect to have a shortstop all over the court at once, can you?

CHRIS. (*with her mouth full*). Court isn't the word.

MR. W. I do not understand. It seems to me that if the shortstop —

BESS. It was this way, Mr. Weaver. (*She makes an elaborate diagram on the tea table with the tea things.*) Lewistown was serving—I mean, they were in the field. Here was the pitcher. The shortstop was way out here; do you see? Bill came up to the bat. He was awfully excited; you could see that! Lewistown was quite far ahead then. Well, the umpire called two strikes and two balls.

CHRIS. One ball.

BESS. *Two*. Don't you remember how funny he sounded? "Two and Two." Like a great horn. He was a very amusing umpire.—Have some more tea, Mr. Weaver?

(*He passes his cup.*)

CHRIS. I know it was one ball! I remember how his hands looked, like this — (*Jumps up and strikes an attitude; arms stretched out horizontally like a windmill.*) "Two and One."

BESS (*again eating cake*). No, I don't.

MR. W. (*impatiently*). Well, never mind, young ladies—do go on. I'm sure it's of no consequence. What did the young man do?

BESS. Bill? Oh, he lined her out!

CHRIS. Bess! How vulgar!

BESS. Well, he did! The ball went right between Harry's feet and how you can blame the shortstop for *that*, Chris, I can't see! And then it just skimmed along; and the second baseman or somebody fell on it and got all mixed up with it. And when he threw it, he threw it to second, and Bill went on to third! It was thrilling—and he let two men in. He had to slide for it, though, and got his lovely clean shirt all dirty. And then Pete came up to the bat, awfully serious and determined looking, and he —

(A great shouting and hullabaloo is heard outside. BESS pauses in the act of illustrating BOYD's swing at the ball and decorously pours herself more tea. CHRIS. and MR. W. turn expectantly. The team enters, in dishevelled baseball costume, BOYD painfully embarrassed in their midst. He steals a look at BESS but she does not look at him. The boys are wild with excitement. Cries of "Yea, Pete!" "Bring in Pete!" "Good old Pete!" etc. They slap him on the back and laugh joyfully.)

BOYD (*impatiently*). Say, quit! You're a lot of silly chumps. I didn't do a bit more than the rest of you. Why don't you make a row about yourselves, for a change? Do, for heaven's sake, calm down! This isn't the only game of the season, you know! Besides, we're disturbing the ladies.

(Tries to break through the crowd, but they won't let him go.)

BILL. Oh, the ladies don't mind! They can appreciate a hero! Three of 'em now for the hero what saved the day! Hip!—Hip! (*Wild cheers*.)

MR. W. (*with his hand to his head*). Heavens!

(The boys give their three cheers and end with "Speech! Speech!")

BOYD. Well, I will make a speech! Perhaps it'll keep you quiet a minute! I—I'll make a confession. Fellows, I hate to own it, but it's the sad truth. I played to-day,—a little bit for the sake of the team,—but mostly,—because I was told I couldn't do it! That's the honest truth!

(BESS, looking apprehensive, tries to escape unnoticed. She cannot pass the group of boys, so sits down again.)

JACK. Told you couldn't do it?

BOYD. Yes! I never would have thought of playing, but when—when I got laughed at, and told I couldn't do it, then my nasty temper got the best of me and I played. Well, I played as I never could play again! I—I'd have blown up if I hadn't won! (*Laughs awkwardly*.) I am ashamed, so much so that I had to tell you. I—I'm not the hero you think me. I guess — (Tries to laugh.)

BILL. That's Boyd all over! Raises the very devil in him to be told he can't do a thing! Oh, fie!

KEN. Come to think of it, that's how he came to propose.

(*Stops short in confusion on remembering BESS. General embarrassment. BESS turns and talks to CHRIS.*)

DICK (*trying to make conversation*). Say, Bill, some game, wasn't it? When Lewistown was walking away from us; and then old Pete comes across with that wallop, what?

BILL. You bet! (*They all murmur in vigorous assent.*)

JACK. Yes, he may not want us to call him a hero, but he is one all the same; and so he can't help himself! What do we care why he played, as long as he won us the game? Three more for him!

(*They cheer even more loudly than before.*)

BILL (*looking out of the window*). Well! Look who's here! Who but our old friend Harry Wilkes!

KEN. Honest? He's a brave boy!

(*They lean out of the window and wave violently at WILKES. The others look surprised. BOYD rather apprehensive.*)

GEO. What the deuce does he want?

JACK. Dunno, I'm sure.

KING. Maybe he's come back to us! (*Loud laughter.*)

Enter WILKES, L.

WILKES. Hello, you all! Where's Boyd? I— (*In some confusion.*) I'd like to speak to him a minute, if you fellows don't mind.

BILL. Mind? Of course we don't! We're not proud! Any one can talk to him! Hey, Pete?

BOYD (*turning*). Hello, Wilkes!

(*They shake hands, then look at each other and begin to laugh.*)

WILKES. Well, how's the heavy batter feeling? Say, Boyd, I couldn't get near you after the game, so I came to tell you I'm—well, confound it, I'm sorry you licked us, but you sure deserved to win! You old fake! (*Laughs again.*) You told me you couldn't play! Well, here's congratulating you, and how much 'll you bet you can't do it again?

(*Loud uproar.*)

BOYD. Keep still a minute, fellows! I won't bet with you, Wilkes! You're quite right, I never could do it again. Only

did it this time because — (Cries of "Aw shut up!" "Forget it!" "He's crazy!" etc.) Well, time will show! I'm going to do my durndest. (Laughs.) You old boob! I'd like to lick you every game this summer, just to show you!

JACK. That's the first natural thing I've heard him say this afternoon!

BOYD. And if I can only find another pitcher —

MR. W. (eagerly rising). Say, Mr. Boyd, if you'd just listen to me a minute. I've been trying all this time to tell you I have a son —

KEN. (aside). Oh, hang! We aren't making a noise! Why don't he go off and die?

BOYD (wearily but politely). Mr. Weaver, we all deeply sympathize with you in your complaint; so much so that we're humbly glad it isn't catching, but —

MR. W. (incensed). He's not a complaint and he's *not* catching! He's a pitcher—and a fine batter besides! (Astonished silence, then uproar.) And he's out of a job at present, and would, I'm sure, be glad to help you out, if you — (Pandemonium breaks loose. MR. W. is lifted on the shoulders of two of the boys and carried bodily from the room, the rest of the team following shouting behind. MR. W. feebly struggles.) I say! Young men! Not so roughly! Not so much noise! You forget my sunstroke! Young ladies! (To the girls who are following them to the door.) Young ladies! I implore you to make them be more gentle!

(He is carried out, the two girls following. BOYD is left standing speechless, facing WILKES who has suddenly become silent.)

BOYD. Now, honest, did you ever hear of such luck as that?

WILKES. No, never; it's great.

(He leans against the fireplace, BOYD against the table. They relapse into silence, then both begin to speak at once.)

BOTH. I say!—I beg pardon, go ahead!

BOYD (laughing). It's all right; go ahead!

WILKES (plunging ahead recklessly). Well, about our compact, you know! I was to help you out of your engagement, you know, if you helped me out of my mess. Which you did. So now I—(resolutely) I'll do my share!

BOYD (hastily). What do you mean?

WILKES. Why, I—I'll speak to Bess as I promised, and get her to —

BOYD. Oh, you needn't bother, really ! It's all right. You see, I didn't play to—to help you out at all. I played because I was sore, and because I wanted to, and —

WILKES. That's awfully good of you, of course, and I appreciate your generosity—but I'm not going to back out. No one can ever say I went back on my word—provided I remembered it ! So —

BOYD (*irritably*). You're very good, but I —

WILKES. That's all right, old boy.

(*They both are growing excited.*)

Enter BESS.

BESS. Why ! What are you two quarreling about now ?

BOYD. Quarreling ? Not at all !

WILKES (*doggedly*). Look here, Bess ! I was just saying to Boyd, I—I really think, you know, you'll have to break off this engagement ! We're really engaged, you know. And I —I feel very badly indeed. (BOYD tries in vain to make him stop.) Very badly, indeed ! You've no right to become engaged to two people at the same time, anyway ! So —

BOYD. I say, Wilkes, *will* you quit ? I asked you not to—you're only making a worse mess than ever —

BESS. I should say you were ! It's absolutely none of your business, Harry Wilkes, whether I'm engaged to Mr. Boyd or not ! You and I were to wait two years before we became definitely engaged, weren't we ?

WILKES. Yes, yes, of course.

BESS. And if, before then, we found any other—any other arrangement that suited us better, we were not to be engaged, weren't we ?

WILKES. Yes, of course.

BESS (*triumphantly*). Well, then ! What about those dancing lessons ?

WILKES (*only half convinced*). Then am I to understand that this two years' business is off, that there is no engagement between us any more ?

BESS. Exactly so !

WILKES (*joyfully*). Gee ! This is too good to be true ! (*Consults watch.*) Er—I say, will you excuse me, please ? I'm due at a dancing lesson !

(Goes out hastily. Embarrassed silence.)

BOYD. Look here, Miss Mason ! (Fingers the things on the table, upsetting everything.) I—of course I know why you wouldn't break off your engagement with me. (Stops dead.)

BESS. Yes ?

BOYD. Of course I know that it's because you think I still need punishing for—for being such a cad. And I know I deserve to be punished. But—but it's only fair to tell you that—that it isn't exactly—punishment any more—to—to be engaged to you. (Stands with head down, hopelessly embarrassed.) So—so if you want to keep on punishing me, you'll break it ! (She is silent.) I'm only telling you this because I think I ought to. I don't want to, a bit. And I suppose you're laughing at me. You always are ! I don't care. It was your laughing at me so that made me win to-day. Do you know that ?

BESS (shyly). Yes, Pete.

BOYD. Is that—I don't suppose that's why you did it, though ?

BESS (very shyly). Yes, Pete !

BOYD (looking up in glad surprise). No ! Is it ? Then you really, actually, wanted me to win ?

BESS. Something like that ! (He takes her hand and kisses it.) Oh ! Are you always just going to kiss my hand, Pete ?

BOYD (in confusion). I beg pardon. I forgot —

BESS. You stupid old—dear ! We're still engaged, aren't we ? (He nods.) Well, then —

(Suddenly realizing, he takes her in his arms.)

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